

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

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DATE: November 25, 2003

TO: Local EMS Agencies
Vision Access Committee
All Other Interested Organizations

FROM: Richard E. Watson
Interim Director

SUBJECT: EMD Guidelines

Enclosed is a copy of the EMS Authority's Emergency Medical Services Dispatch Program Guidelines (EMD Guidelines). The EMD Guidelines were established under the Vision Project by the multi-disciplinary Vision Access Committee, which represented all stakeholder interests, including law enforcement, fire service, ambulance providers, hospitals, local emergency medical services agencies (LEMSAs), medical directors, and communication managers. Committee members volunteered numerous hours to craft these guidelines. The guidelines also underwent an extensive process of review, including a 45-day public comment period, before they were approved by the Commission on EMS on March 19, 2003.

The purpose of the EMD Guidelines is to expand the use of emergency medical dispatch statewide. Promoting these guidelines has been one of my highest priorities since becoming Interim Director of the EMS Authority. I have three young grandchildren and would like to feel confident that if one of these children were seriously injured, I could call 9-1-1 and receive potentially life-saving medical instructions before the EMS responders arrived. I understand, however, that 50 percent of the dispatch centers in our State have not implemented an EMD program and do not provide these instructions.

The EMS Authority's position is that all 9-1-1 centers in the State implement an EMD program. The completion of these EMD Guidelines is a vital step in accomplishing this goal. The Authority has received much positive feedback regarding the guidelines, which reinforces our confidence in their value to the EMS community as well as to the general public.

As many of you are aware, in March 2003 the California Attorney General's Office was requested to give its opinion regarding the following question relevant to the EMD Guidelines:

"Are Emergency Medical Dispatch services subject to the review and approval of the local emergency medical services agency even when the services are developed, implemented, and operated in accordance with State guidelines?"

The Attorney General's Office issued its opinion in September. Its conclusion is as follows:

“Emergency Medical Dispatch services are subject to the review and approval of the local emergency medical services agency even when the services are developed, implemented, and operated in accordance with State guidelines.”

The EMS Authority accepts the Attorney General's opinion. The opinion does not change the guidelines. In fact, the Attorney General's opinion strengthens and clarifies the need for coordination between EMD providers and LEMSAs. The EMS Authority will continue to urge LEMSAs and public safety dispatch agencies to work together to adopt the guidelines.

The Attorney General's opinion affirms that the LEMSAs are responsible for review, approval, and coordination of the EMD programs. Under the EMD Guidelines, provider agencies are responsible for the decision to implement the program as well as for the training, authorization, and ongoing competence of their personnel. This model is consistent with regulations governing the use of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) by public safety AED providers.

If there are differences of opinion between the providers and the LEMSAs in the implementation of the guidelines, the EMS Authority is ready to assist with any issues that cannot be resolved on the local level.

Please contact me if you have any questions regarding the guidelines or the Attorney General's opinion. The official opinion is also enclosed for your reference. Please note that additional copies of the EMD Guidelines and the Attorney General's opinion are available on the EMS Authority's Web site at <http://www.emsa.ca.gov/emsddivision/emdpage.asp>.